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The Honorable Brian McMahon
Chairman
Joint Committee on Atomic Energy
Washington, D. C.

Dear Senator McMahon:

I have received your letter of 31 March 1952, and have given it most careful consideration. Your concern at the continued incompleteness of the evidence with respect to progress of the Soviet in the atomic field and any possible development in the thermo-nuclear field is fully and completely shared by us here in the Central Intelligence Agency. I can assure you, and without qualification, that ever since I have been Director; the Agency, in accordance with policies established by the National Security Council, has singled out atomic energy intelligence for a unique high priority second only to indications of the imminent outbreak of hostilities. We have made some progress. This progress is not all I could have hoped. You have suggested eight questions which in this letter I shall answer generally with the added suggestion that in view of the sensitive nature of the subject matter, a more complete answer should be furnished by an oral briefing which we should be glad to set up for you personally, at your convenience.

As indicated above, atomic energy intelligence has been singled out for a unique high priority. We have devoted to this task the funds and personnel which we felt could be effectively employed in this work and have had the benefit of high level fully cleared technical advice from outside the Agency. In this work we have had the cooperation and within their respective competencies have depended upon the intelligence agencies of the State Department and of the Armed Services, as well as the intelligence staff of the Atomic Energy Commission.

One of the more important of the major subdivisions of the Agency is the office devoted to scientific intelligence, and this office in turn gives top priority to atomic energy intelligence. Within this office about twenty people, half of whom are professionals, devote their full-time efforts to research and analysis associated with Soviet atomic energy intelligence. However, of greater significance is the competence of the personnel involved and their ability to consider and interpret the volume of new information relevant to this field of interest.

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It is impossible to segregate the overall expenditure devoted to atomic energy intelligence as many persons other than those in the scientific office, particularly those in the field of intelligence gathering both here in the Agency and in our several foreign stations, devote a considerable portion of their time to this work. Further, there are many collateral endeavors, which I can explain in an oral briefing, which are devoted to acquiring the tools and the techniques which could be made directly applicable to atomic energy intelligence work. At the moment we have adequate available funds to undertake any endeavors in this field of atomic intelligence which we feel could be usefully exploited and I will have certain suggestions to make orally with regard to more effective coordination of this work. We have, of course, the problem of securing on a full-time basis all of the highly technical trained persons in this field which we would like, but this is due in part to the fact that they are already engaged on direct work in the field of production and hence are not available on a full-time basis. In general outside cleared consultants have been generous of their time and services when called upon.

I appreciate the spirit of your letter. It will encourage all of us to give added effort to this all important work and will encourage me, if I see any opportunities of improving the situation, to consult further with you as to the ways and means of doing so.

Faithfully yours,

Walter B. Smith
Director

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Dulles

This reply from the DCI to Senator McMahan has been prepared by OSI on the basis of your draft, (returned herewith) and has been approved by [REDACTED] OSO. I have reviewed this revision and feel it is satisfactory.

Routed & DDC Together LEB
w/ his draft and basic ltr from McMahan

APR 16 1952

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